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Special economic, humanitarian and disaster relief assistance

Letter dated 1 July 2003 from the Permanent Representative of Sweden to the United Nations addressed to the Secretary-General

I have the honour to transmit the Meeting conclusions, Principles and Good Practice of Humanitarian Donorship, and Implementation Plan for Good Humanitarian Donorship emanating from the International Meeting on Good Humanitarian Donorship, held in Stockholm on 16 and 17 June 2003 (see annexes I, II and III).

I would be grateful if the present letter and its annexes could be circulated as a document of the General Assembly, under item 41 of the preliminary list, and of the Economic and Social Council, under agenda item 5.

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Annex I to the letter dated 1 July 2003 from the Permanent Representative of Sweden to the United Nations addressed to the Secretary-General

International Meeting on Good Humanitarian Donorship, Stockholm, 16 and 17 June 2003

Meeting conclusions

Meeting in Stockholm on 16 and 17 June 2003, representatives of Government and multilateral donors, United Nations institutions, the International Red Cross and Red Crescent Movement and other organizations involved in humanitarian action reviewed past achievements as well as current challenges in global humanitarian action.

Donors underlined their concern at the large number of people that continue to be affected by humanitarian crises.

With regard to the nature of crises and the international humanitarian system, donors noted the wide-ranging challenges presented by the complexity of many crises today. They noted the difficulties in ensuring safe humanitarian access to people in need. They noted the growing attention of the international community to humanitarian action, and the substantial increase in the number of actors involved in humanitarian action. They noted the challenges this had presented to the effectiveness and coherence of international response.

With regard to donor policy and behaviour, donors recalled the accomplishments achieved in increasing the level of response and improving mechanisms for international coordination. They underlined that these accomplishments had not been sufficient to ensure that existing humanitarian needs were met. Significant shortcomings in the level and coordination of response remained features of many crises.

Aware that extensive humanitarian needs were likely to persist in the foreseeable future, donors stressed the need to reinforce global respect for international humanitarian law and humanitarian principles, to promote capacities for prevention and preparedness, and to strengthen international donor response to humanitarian crises. While reaffirming the primary responsibility of States for meeting the needs of victims of humanitarian crises within their own borders, donors recognized that there were many measures that they could take to enhance the coherence and effectiveness of their actions as well as their accountability to beneficiaries, implementing organizations and domestic constituencies, with regard to the funding, coordination, follow-up and evaluation of such actions.

The common international goal of meeting the entirety of global humanitarian needs would serve as the foundation for all such efforts.

Bearing in mind these considerations, and emphasizing the need for implementing organizations to continue their pursuit of enhanced effectiveness, efficiency and accountability, donors endorsed the Principles and Good Practice of Humanitarian Donorship outlined in annex II as a common platform of understanding of good humanitarian donorship, to assist them in formulating their responses to humanitarian crises.

Donors resolved to put into practice the Principles and Good Practice through an Implementation Plan for Good Humanitarian Donorship (see annex III).

Annex II to the letter dated 1 July 2003 from the Permanent Representative of Sweden to the United Nations addressed to the Secretary-General

Principles and Good Practice of Humanitarian Donorship

Endorsed in Stockholm, 17 June 2003, by the representatives of Australia, Belgium, Canada, Denmark, the European Commission, Finland, France, Germany, Ireland, Japan, Luxembourg, the Netherlands, Norway, Sweden, Switzerland, the United Kingdom of Great Britain and Northern Ireland and the United States of America

Objectives and definition of humanitarian action

1. The objectives of humanitarian action are to save lives, alleviate suffering and maintain human dignity during and in the aftermath of man-made crises and natural disasters, as well as to prevent, and strengthen preparedness for, the occurrence of such situations.

2. Humanitarian action should be guided by the humanitarian principles of *humanity*, meaning the centrality of saving human lives and alleviating suffering wherever it is found; *impartiality*, meaning the implementation of actions solely on the basis of need, without discrimination between or within affected populations; *neutrality*, meaning that humanitarian action must not favour any side in an armed conflict or other dispute where such action is carried out; and *independence*, meaning the autonomy of humanitarian objectives apart from the political, economic, military or other objectives that any actor may have with regard to areas where humanitarian action is being implemented.

3. Humanitarian action includes the protection of civilians and those no longer taking part in hostilities, and the provision of food, water and sanitation, shelter, health services and other items of assistance, undertaken for the benefit of affected people and to facilitate the return to normal lives and livelihoods.

General principles

4. Respect and promote the implementation of international humanitarian law, refugee law and human rights.

5. While reaffirming the primary responsibility of States for the victims of humanitarian emergencies within their own borders, strive to ensure flexible and timely funding, on the basis of the collective obligation of striving to meet humanitarian needs.

6. Allocate humanitarian funding in proportion to needs and on the basis of needs assessments.

7. Request implementing humanitarian organizations to ensure, to the greatest possible extent, adequate involvement of beneficiaries in the design, implementation, monitoring and evaluation of humanitarian response.

8. Strengthen the capacity of affected countries and local communities to prevent, prepare for, mitigate and respond to humanitarian crises, with the goal of ensuring

that Governments and local communities are better able to meet their responsibilities and coordinate effectively with humanitarian partners.

9. Provide humanitarian assistance in ways that are supportive of recovery and long-term development, striving to ensure support, where appropriate, to the maintenance and return of sustainable livelihoods and transitions from humanitarian relief to recovery and development activities.

10. Support and promote the central and unique role of the United Nations in providing leadership and coordination of international humanitarian action, the special role of the International Committee of the Red Cross, and the vital role of the United Nations, the International Red Cross and Red Crescent Movement and non-governmental organizations in implementing humanitarian action.

Good practices in donor financing, management and accountability

(a) Funding

11. Strive to ensure that funding of humanitarian action in new crises does not adversely affect the meeting of needs in ongoing crises.

12. Recognizing the necessity of dynamic and flexible response to changing needs in humanitarian crises, strive to ensure predictability and flexibility in funding to United Nations organizations, funds and programmes and to other key humanitarian organizations.

13. While stressing the importance of transparent and strategic priority-setting and financial planning by implementing organizations, explore the possibility of reducing, or enhancing the flexibility of, earmarking, and of introducing longer-term funding arrangements.

14. Contribute responsibly, and on the basis of burden-sharing, to United Nations Consolidated Inter-Agency Appeals and to International Red Cross and Red Crescent Movement appeals, and actively support the formulation of Common Humanitarian Action Plans (CHAP) as the primary instrument for strategic planning, prioritization and coordination in complex emergencies.

(b) Promoting standards and enhancing implementation

15. Request that implementing humanitarian organizations fully adhere to good practice and be committed to promoting accountability, efficiency and effectiveness in implementing humanitarian action.

16. Promote the use of Inter-Agency Standing Committee guidelines and principles on humanitarian activities, the Guiding Principles on Internal Displacement and the 1994 Code of Conduct for the International Red Cross and Red Crescent Movement and Non-Governmental Organizations (NGOs) in Disaster Relief.

17. Maintain readiness to offer support to the implementation of humanitarian action, including the facilitation of safe humanitarian access.

18. Support mechanisms for contingency planning by humanitarian organizations, including, as appropriate, allocation of funding, to strengthen capacities for response.

19. Affirm the primary position of civilian organizations in implementing humanitarian action, particularly in areas affected by armed conflict. In situations where military capacity and assets are used to support the implementation of humanitarian action, ensure that such use is in conformity with international humanitarian law and humanitarian principles, and recognizes the leading role of humanitarian organizations.

20. Support the implementation of the 1994 Guidelines on the Use of Military and Civil Defence Assets in Disaster Relief and the 2003 Guidelines on the Use of Military and Civil Defence Assets to Support United Nations Humanitarian Activities in Complex Emergencies.

(c) Learning and accountability

21. Support learning and accountability initiatives for the effective and efficient implementation of humanitarian action.

22. Encourage regular evaluations of international responses to humanitarian crises, including assessments of donor performance.

23. Ensure a high degree of accuracy, timeliness and transparency in donor reporting on official humanitarian assistance spending, and encourage the development of standardized formats for such reporting.

Annex III to the letter dated 1 July 2003 from the Permanent Representative of Sweden to the United Nations addressed to the Secretary-General

Implementation Plan for Good Humanitarian Donorship

Elaborated in Stockholm, 17 June 2003

With the aim of enhancing humanitarian response through strengthened coordination, effectiveness and accountability, donors endorsed the Principles and Good Practice of Humanitarian Donorship (see annex II) and elaborated the Implementation Plan detailed below.

Donors further agreed that the follow-up measures in the Implementation Plan would be taken in partnership with humanitarian organizations and in full consideration of the outcomes of the Humanitarian Financing Work Programme of the Montreux process on improving the United Nations Consolidated Inter-Agency Appeals process, and of other relevant processes.

1. Interested donors will identify, in consultation with humanitarian organizations, at least one crisis subject to a Consolidated Inter-Agency Appeal, to which the Principles and Good Practice of Humanitarian Donorship will be applied in a concerted and coordinated manner no later than 2005. Preparatory work for this purpose will begin immediately.

2. Emphasizing the importance of peer reviews of humanitarian action, donors will invite the Organisation for Economic Cooperation and Development (OECD) Development Assistance Committee (DAC) to consider ways to significantly strengthen the coverage of humanitarian action in existing and/or complementary peer reviews. Necessary resources to strengthen the capacity of the DAC secretariat could be provided on a voluntary basis.

3. Drawing on agreed donor progress within the field of development cooperation, including relevant elements of the Rome Declaration on Harmonization of 25 February 2003 (A/57/763, enclosure), donors undertake to jointly explore the possibility of harmonizing reporting requirements and management demands placed upon implementing humanitarian organizations. Donors decided to pursue this aim beginning with a pilot case.

4. Donors will aim, in consultation with the United Nations and OECD/DAC, to agree on a comprehensive common definition of official humanitarian assistance for reporting and statistical purposes, including clarity of definitions distinguishing between multilateral and bilateral humanitarian assistance.

5. Participating donors will seek to promote the wider use among all official donors of the Principles and Good Practice of Humanitarian Donorship, and to invite all interested donors to participate in the follow-up of this Plan.

With the objective of effectively pursuing and further developing the aims outlined in this Plan, and of ensuring appropriate coordination with other ongoing processes, donors agreed to establish an informal Implementation Group for Good Humanitarian Donorship.

The Implementation Group will consist of interested donors and other humanitarian partners as appropriate. Unless otherwise decided, the Implementation Group will exist for one year and will be based at Geneva.

The Implementation Group may suggest the convening of a meeting in one year to review the realization of this Plan and other relevant developments.